

Camp Creek Golf Club:

Part of Florida's Northwest Passage

BY Joel Jackson

A maze of bunkers guards the 13th green. Photo by Joel Jackson.

As the title indicates, this issue of *The Florida Green* ventures into Florida's great Northwest Territory, affectionately known as the Panhandle. When the Tallahassee-based Coastal Plains GCSA dissolved, we added our At-Large FGCSA members as a group to represent this region in the state in our cover story rotation.

In September, I packed up our new digital camera, tripod and digital recorder and headed to WaterSound, near Panama City Beach, to visit with Larry Livingston, CGCS and tour the three area golf courses under his supervision: Camp Creek, Shark's Tooth and The Origins. These courses and a coastal

development called Water Color are all owned by the St. Joe Company. Once a giant in the paper industry, the St. Joe Company has also become a major land developer. Their approach to responsible development is a key part this story.

Florida's coastline has several nicknames depending on the region. Down the east coast and up the west coast most of us are familiar with The First Coast, The Space Coast, The Treasure Coast, The Gold Coast, the Keys and the Ten Thousand Islands, The Platinum Coast and The Suncoast. Once you get north of Tampa, The Nature Coast, The Forgotten Coast and The Emerald Coast are perhaps less widely known.

Once you get to the Emerald Coast, roughly from Panama City to Pensacola, we find the Gulf Coast GCSA, which is home to many of our northwest Florida superintendents and most of our At-Large FGCSA members. The Gulf Coast members have a thriving chapter affiliated with the GCSAA, but geography makes interaction with the rest of the FGCSA quite a challenge.

However, as Florida superintendents they know they have a stake in the state-wide issues we all face and as such made a donation of \$2,500 for the Florida Turf Industry Economic Impact Study which will be released soon. So we bid welcome to our FGCSA At-Large members in

northwest Florida and in the Gulf Coast Chapter to the pages of the Florida Green.

One such dual-member is Larry Livingston, CGCS who is no stranger to many of us down the Peninsula from his many years in the Tampa-Sarasota area. Livingston made his move to the Panama City Beach area ten years ago to become the superintendent of the Tom Fazio designed Camp Creek Golf Club. In 2006 and 2007 he also assumed oversight of the Origins and Shark's Tooth courses located just a few minutes' drive north and east from his office at Camp Creek.

"St. Joe recognized their strength was

in developing, not operating, projects including golf courses, hotels, marinas and even upscale camping areas," Livingston said. "So, they brought in Troon Management to operate the golf courses. They liked Troon's track record with high-end properties and felt it would be a good fit."

The Emerald Coast is similar to other coastal areas in Florida in that everyone loves the beach and that's where you logically find the most development, but you don't have to stray too far inland to be surrounded by the woodlands of the Point Washington State Forest. It is in that environment we find the Troon Trio of golf courses.

"St. Joe leaves as much native mate-

rial as possible whenever they develop a property," Livingston said. "You will see very mature trees and native vegetation up close to most all of the buildings and structures. It's almost like they dropped them into the landscape by helicopter. In all the condo or apartment sites, there are always large green spaces or 'commons' areas for people to enjoy and the kids to play."

The golf courses are surrounded by these woodlands and you see very little evidence of the residential areas, which makes for a truly enjoyable outdoor experience. In addition, the Shark's Tooth layout borders Lake Powell, a unique body of water known as a coastal

CAMP CREEK GOLF CLUB

Location:

WaterSound, Fla.

Ownership:

St. Joe Company, managed by Troon Golf; private 18 holes, championship tees 7159 yards, par 72, Slope/Rating 152/76, Avg. rounds 21,000/year.

Designed by: Tom Fazio, constructed by MacCurrach Golf Construction and opened in 2001.

Management Team:

Club Manager Mike Jansen, Head Golf

Professional Jaxon Hardy, Golf Course Superintendent Larry Livingston

Major projects: 2006 bunker renovation – added SandDam liners and new sand.

Acres under maintenance: 145.6; total property: 1023.3

Greens: 3.45 acres TifEagl; avg size 7485 sq. ft.; HOC 0.110 - 0.125 in.; no overseeding. Green speed goals 10 - 11.5.

Tees: 4.5 acres. Tifway 419. HOC 0.45 in. Overseeded with Paragon



Camp Creek Maintenance Staff

ryegrass at 15 lbs/1000 sq. ft.

Fairways and Roughs: Fwys 40 acres, Roughs 37 acres; Tifway 419 bermudagrass; HOC 0.45 in. on fwys and 1.5 in/ on roughs. Fwys overseeded with TMI Paragon Ryegrass @ 500 lbs/acre. **Non-turf areas:** 65 bunkers – sand type: Red Bay sub-angular from the Lamar Pit, hand raked. 12 large, native sand, waste areas raked with a Toro Sand Pro. 8 lakes total 40.15 acres. Maintained in-house.

Irrigation: Effluent with ground

water back-up.

Flowtronex VFD pump station @ 2,250 gpm. Three -75 hp turbine pumps. Toro Site Pro E-Osmac controls. 1,333 heads with part-circle heads along perimeters. Fertilization: 85 gpm double-headed pump with two 2,500-gal. holding tanks with concrete containment. Two back-up groundwater well, one 6-in.

and one 2-in. 2-million-gallon irrigation reservoir.

Water Conservation: ET-based irrigation programming adjusted by field observations.

Total Staff: 21. (18 full time and three part time at 40 hrs/week). Key staff: Josh Parker, first assistant; Clay Morgan, second assistant/irrigation tech; Tim Greggo and Greg Snow, equipment techs; Dave Conway, pest control; James Yeakel, admin assistant for all three courses.

dune lake. This stretch of Florida coastline has the largest number of coastal dune lakes in the US, Livingston noted. Using the Florida Atlas; I counted nearly 20 from Destin to Panama City. The lakes are really coastal estuaries that become sealed off from the Gulf by the shifting beach sand bars. Every so often large storms breach the barriers and the “lake” water and the salt water mix.

This part of the state also defies the norms we associate with golf in Florida. As the Peninsula bustles with winter golf activity, up here this is the slower season. They make hay in the spring and summer, but visitors begin dwindling in the fall as the cold fronts march through with much more regularity than in the southern regions. It also takes some getting used to seeing the sun set along the surf line instead of smack-dad over the middle of the Gulf.

This “reverse season” reality requires that Livingston get creative in performing the necessary annual maintenance programs like aerifying during their



View from the forward tee on the par-3, 12th hole. Photo by Joel Jackson

busy warm season. Livingston explained a concept he has devised to minimize disruption to play.

“I began experimenting with using smaller quadra-tines on a more frequent

basis to remove organic matter build-up and yet minimize disruption and recovery time to the putting surfaces. While southern courses may use large tines two or three times during late spring and

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summer, we go maybe five or six times with the smaller tines. We still have to aerify during the warm season to get turf recovery, but by using the smaller-diameter tines we don't have to top dress as heavy— or at all — because we are already on a regular light dusting program.”

“Sometimes we can get a closed day to do the job, or we may have to do nine holes a day back to back. The greens are puttable the next day versus the 10-14 days needed for full recovery of a large-tine plugging. Our regular golfers might finish their round and say, ‘I see you did the small holes again!’ We always tell them we aerified and we give them a money-back option if they feel the course wasn't up to expectations. We get very few complaints using this method.

“During the growing season we verticut weekly, apply 5 ounces of Primo™ weekly, topdress every one or two weeks, and roll greens every two weeks except when turf growth slows down. I feel rolling can be too aggressive sometimes and cause stress.”

Getting back to the responsible development theme, all three courses are certified in the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program. The design of the golf courses features abundant wildlife habitat and corridors. On the Origins course, Livingston showed me a bridge that St. Joe had installed, replacing an old roadbed that had cut across a wetland, to restore the natural wildlife corridor and flow of seasonally high water levels.

Livingston has been conducting school tours on the courses for several years as part of the ACSP Outreach and Education section of the certification process.

“We work closely with the Seaside Neighborhood School, a nearby charter,” Livingston said, “showing the students how golf course maintenance relates to overall environmental management. Some of their on-course activities have included wildlife counts, water sampling and native area plantings.”

The 15th hole at Shark's Tooth borders Lake Powell, a coastal dune lake. Photo by Joel Jackson





SHARK'S TOOTH GOLF CLUB

Location: Lake Powell
Ownership: St. Joe Company, managed by Troon Golf, private 8 holes, 7,204 yards, par 72, Slope/Rating 136/74.9, 12,400 avg rounds/year
Designed by: Greg Norman, opened in 2003.

Management Team: Club Manager Mike Jansen, Head Golf Pro Mike Pazakis, Golf Course Superintendent Larry Livingston
Acreage under maintenance: 73.4.
Greens: 3.45 acres TifEagle; avg. 6,511



Shark's Tooth G.C. Maintenance Staff

sq. ft., HOC 0.110 - 0.125 in.; no overseeding. Green speed goals 10 - 11.5.
Tees: 4.65 acres Tifway 419; HOC 0.45 in., overseeded with Paragon ryegrass at 15 lbs/1,000 sq. ft.

type: Red Bay sub-angular from the Lamar Pit. Bunkers hand raked.
Irrigation, Water Conservation and Staff: included in facts about Camp Creek

Fairways and Roughs: Fwys 43.6 acres, Roughs 20 acres; Tifway 419 bermudagrass, HOC 0.45in. on fwys and 1.5 in. on roughs. Fwys overseeded with TMI Paragon Ryegrass @ 500 lbs/acre.
Non-turf areas: 59 bunkers. Sand

The 18th green and clubhouse at Shark's Tooth. Photo by Joel Jackson

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Livingston also is involved in the school's mentoring program that exposes students to various occupational opportunities. He added, "Other mentors include doctors, architects and chefs. We donate one hour per week about six times a year to go and make presentations about our professions."

Later over lunch, Livingston offered his take on the current wave of regulations.

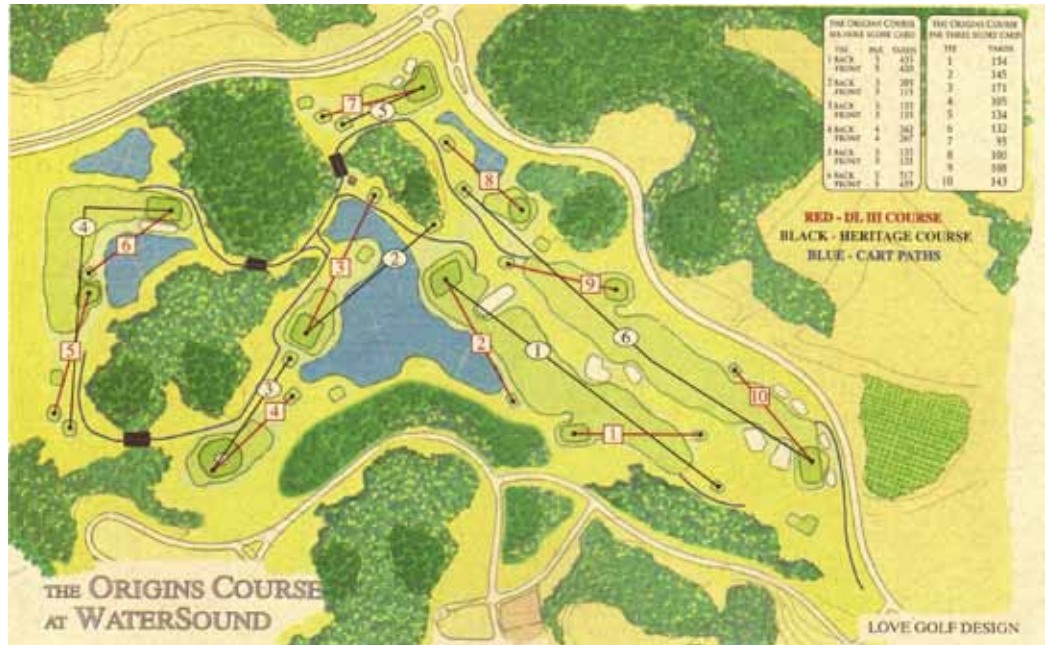
"The answer is education not regulation," he said. "You can't save the environment and exclude people, and people need to accept more responsibility for protecting our resources.

While the new soil-moisture-sensor technology is exciting, homeowners and HOA's can invest in simple rain switches or "mini-clicks" at a very low cost. And

they ought to be responsible enough to turn off the automatic systems when it is raining."

After lunch we toured the Origins Golf Course.

You will have to see this layout in order to really understand what I'm about to tell you. There are six regulation holes and 10 par-3 holes on the course. Many holes share the same green by using two



Scorecard for the 6-hole regulation and 10-hole, par-3 Origins courses. At right, a tee sign shows combination regulation and par 3 holes on the Origins course. Photos by Joel Jackson



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ORIGINS GOLF COURSE

Location: WaterSound

Ownership: St. Joe Company, managed by Troon Golf; private/resort

6 regulation holes: 10 par-3 holes. Heritage Course: 1,748 yds. Par 3 Course: 1,296 yds.

Designed by: Davis Love, constructed in-house and opened in 2006.

Management Team: Club Manager Mike Jansen, Head Golf Professional Jaxon Hardy, Golf Course Superintendent Larry Livingston

Turf type: Monostand of Sea Isle Supreme Seashore Paspalum for the entire golf course.

Greens: 2 acres, HOC 0.110 - 0.125 in.; Tees 1 acre, HOC 0.45 in., Fairways 12 acres, HOC 0.45 in., Roughs 6 acres. No overseeding.

Non-turf areas: 12 bunkers and 3 waste areas with native plants.

Irrigation: Effluent water source with groundwater backup. Flowtronex VFD 800 gpm with two 25 hp booster pumps. Toro Touch Net Controls. 327 heads with part circles along perimeters.

Staff: Assistant Superintendent Jay Weber with support from Camp Creek as needed.



JAY WEBER, ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

Photo by Joel Jackson.

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There's a bunker in the middle of this double green on the Origins course. Photo by Joel Jackson

different colored flags for the Davis Love or Heritage layouts, and at the request of the golfers, a nine-hole configuration is being mapped out. It is a great course for more casual golf and beginners or for an afternoon family outing.

I asked Livingston how he viewed his

position given his responsibilities seemed like a mini-regional superintendent.

“I have no title other than golf course superintendent and that’s the way I like it,” he said. “I can’t say enough about the maintenance crews at each course.

They make my overall job very easy and

I want to give them the recognition they deserve. We are part of a big team with the partnership of Troon and St. Joe. Our job – my job – is to make sure the whole team is successful.”



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SUPERINTENDENT FACTS

Born in Hot Springs, Arkansas. Raised in Tupelo, Mississippi. **Family:** Married to wife, Suzanne. Two daughters, Emily is a freshman at U. of South Florida and Lucy is a high school senior.

Education: B.S. in Agronomy, Mississippi State U., 1976.

Employment: Golf Course Superintendent over three courses:

2000 – Present, Camp Creek GC, and 2006 – Present, The Origins GC located in Water-Sound, FL (Enrolled in AI Silver Sanctuary Program) and 2007-Present, Shark's Tooth GC, Panama City Beach, FL (Certified AI Silver Sanctuary). 1990 – 2000, Golf Course Superintendent, River Hills GC, Valrico; 1982 – 1990, Golf Course Superintendent Gator Creek GC, Sarasota; 1981 – 1982, Assist. Superintendent CC of Birmingham, AL; 1980-1983, Co-owner Livingston Lawn, Birmingham, AL; 1978-1980, Golf Course Superintendent Geen Valley CC (now Hoover CC); 1976-1978, Golf Course Superintendent Tupelo CC, Tupelo, MS.

Professional Affiliations & Offices Held: Class A, Certified Golf Course Superintendent of the GCSAA since 1988. Past Director, Mississippi Turfgrass Assn; Past President Suncoast GCSA; Past Director FTGA;

Goals & Accomplishments: GCSAA Conference Speaker, 59th International Golf Course Conference and Show, Houston, TX (1989); 1997 Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary, River Hills GC; 2004 Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary, Camp Creek GC; Oversaw construction of The Origins GC in 2006; Volunteer for Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance taking water samples for Florida Lake Watch in Western Lake since 2004..

Hobbies & Interests: Golf, tennis, scuba diving, fishing, kayaking, environmental protection



LARRY LIVINGSTON, CGCS

Photo by Joel Jackson.

FUN FACTS

Personal heroes: Chuck Yeager and Charles Lindberg I'd give anything to meet: The four people who raised my mother and father

My fantasy is: Going into space

My most amazing golf shot: Two double eagles, both made at the Tupelo C.C.

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